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# THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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*Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.*

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For paragraphs under the word "Ans." the editor is personally responsible.

*August, 1891.*

## QUESTION CXXXIV.

*If life on this earth is punitive, reformative, and evolutionary for man, what is it from the standpoint of the lower animals, who have no Devachanic reward, no reincarnation, and no immortality? It seems an injustice that they should thus suffer and then perish, without reward and without a future.*

*Ans.*—All suffering which is not directly connected with voluntary wrong-doing seems unjust, and there are doubtless difficulties in bringing the case of the lower animals fully within the range of Karma considered ethically. Yet there are two considerations which may help to make that case less anomalous.

It is understood that the process of vital evolution upward from inorganic matter to man is like the mounting of a wave through and past successive strata of increasing fineness. That is to say, not that a vegetable becomes an animal and that the animal becomes man, but that the differentiated vital principle which animated the lower advances later to animate the higher and then the highest. It, so to speak, *percolates upward* through zone after zone. As soon as it reaches a zone wherein its em-

bodiment connects it with consciousness and will, ethical Karma begins to attach, and, though the distinct Ego stage, plus Devachan and reïncaration, is still beyond, there may be enough of a Karmic factor to color the next embodiment. The sufferings of a lower animal may be compensated by happiness upon the plane of evolution to which its informing principle thereafter steps. That the connection is not perceived or the memory existent is no more a difficulty than in the case of human reïncarnations.

The other consideration is that the evident moral differences among animals seem to necessitate Karmic results. It is not simply that one dog may be ferocious and another tender, one treacherous and another faithful, but that, while there is no small range in the manifestation of good feeling among ordinary members of a species, there also occur at times phenomenal cases of the deliberate sacrifice of pleasure and even life under the influence of gratitude or affection. A dog which drowns when striving to save its master's child, or a horse which will strain itself to death rather than let its master be overtaken by pursuers, exhibits a moral quality not inferior to that of human heroes, and has a claim to fitting recompense. The only possible recompense is in whatever embodiment the evolutionary scheme next assigns to its "soul". If, moreover, an animal corrects itself of faults under gentle, not coercive, influences, it exhibits a moral sense not exhibited by another of opposite character, and this implies both a different evolutionary past and a different evolutionary future.

These various facts do not point to a Devachan for animals, or to an immediate reëmbodiment on the same plane of genus or species, but to such advance as is commensurate with whatever action has been exhibited by the intelligent and moral sense, faint or vivid, of the particular animal. If so, then they do not suffer or perish uselessly, or have no reward and no future.

There is a collateral thought which bears upon the matter. The sufferings and death of animals, as we see both, are almost wholly in the domesticated state, the exceptions being from the brutalities of so-called "sportsmen". So far as can be as-

certained, the sufferings of animals in a wild condition are exceedingly slight. The absence even of carcasses and bones from regions first explored is still a mystery. Now if the introduction of pain into the animal kingdom is due to man, it is fair to suppose that Nature must bring about compensation through him. This may be in part by the training, discipline, development consequent upon domestication, by which the level of animal intelligence is raised, and also an opportunity given for the moral qualities of the higher race to be impressed upon the lower. But it is probable, further, that Karma and Reïncarnation are concerned. A man who is good to a dumb animal which dies may perhaps encounter very soon the reëmbodiment of its vital principle, and may again be good. He, however, has a long Devachan, during which great advance may be made by it. Far on, he may again, though of course ignorantly, reencounter it in a condition advanced enough for companionship and affection,—say a dog or a horse. He receives benefit, and so does the animal. If its first contact with humanity was miserable, its later contact with a better specimen was fortunate, and the ultimate result in furthering its ascent may more than compensate for primal suffering. This is not fanciful,—at least not to anybody who thinks.

It may be said with full assurance that the All-Wise and All-Just, of whose perfect administration the great Law of Karma is the abiding expression, could hardly have omitted from its scope the enormous majority of sentient beings; and, further, that as inquiry discloses ever more and more proof of strict justice towards each member of the human family, a like result will come from larger knowledge of the brute creation.

## QUESTION CXXXV.

*Why do not Theosophists, as such, engage in public reforms,—such as coöperative colonies and institutions, and other protests against things as they are?*

*Ans.*—This must mean "Why does not the Theosophical Society, as such, engage," etc. An individual Theosophist has not any standing "as such", and, if on a Board of Directors,

would be so simply as an individual, just as would John Smith a Methodist or Henry Jones a Churchman.

This Question has been copiously answered in FORUM No. 11. As to coöperative colonies and institutions, it may be added that they are still on trial and that the results thus far have not been encouraging. The last-published statistical tables show that a large proportion have been failures and that very few have been even measurably successful. There are various reasons for this. One is that an essential to prosperity is the possession by all members of the same spirit of conscientious and enduring devotion to the one end. But this is hardly possible to secure. Some are sure to fall below the level, even if they reached it at the beginning, and then come jealousies, laziness, and self-seeking by them, and a revolt of the spirit of justice in the others. Another reason is that the talent to conduct such an enterprise is rare, and commands, according to the law of supply and demand, a high salary. But this, upon the theory of such institutions, it is not to have, and hence the institution starts by defying all experience. Another reason is that the principle of equal participation by all in government, irrespective of fitness or training or degree of interest, tends in the long run to the lowering of standards and the substitution of other than business methods in business affairs. The steady deterioration of American "statesmen" and government illustrates this. Another reason is that thoroughness in management declines as the representative is substituted for the individual interest,—a fact voluminously demonstrated by Herbert Spencer. And a fifth reason is in the inadequacy of authority to enforce discipline.

The FORUM is not saying that these things *ought* to be so, but simply that they *are*. At the present stage of human development the conception of solidarity and the purpose to conform to it are not sufficiently matured to make such enterprises hopeful. That they may become so in time we may well believe. But business projects based upon sentiments not yet existing and only probable some centuries ahead are clearly premature, and premature efforts never succeed. There is reason to think that in another hundred years Theosophical truths will

have moderately pervaded the community, yet we cannot act now as if we were in 1991.

Protests, as such, amount to very little. A business-like Theosophist is not going to put his money or his time into an unsound scheme merely to show other people that he objects to their ways. Nothing, indeed, could be more unwise, for, when the unsound scheme collapsed, the other people would jeer. Theosophists, like their fellowmen, wish to make use of all the facts and laws which commercial operations have disclosed, and to make their investments with all attainable skill and sagacity. There is no reason why they should be Quixotic or merely declamatory.

There is, however, a collateral matter worth a word. Theosophists have convictions as to the reformatory and elevating effects of Theosophy, and, as their numbers and strength increase, are becoming enabled to give them practical expression. In certain centers, notably in New York City, they have banded together for direct Theosophical work among the lower classes, and have thus inaugurated a philanthropic enterprise on the lines those convictions dictate. It is too soon yet to pronounce upon results, but everything thus far is most cheering. For observe, this attempt is not in defiance of well-understood principles of human nature, but in accordance with those principles; and it does not repel the records of experience, but accepts them. Hence it has promise of endurance and success.

## QUESTION CXXXVI.

*If true, as said, that "the Theosophical Society makes no claim to help from Adepts", what means the article "The Theosophical Society and H. P. B." in Lucifer of December, 1890?*

*Ans.*—Having regard to facts to be stated further on, the FORUM understands the above quotation to lay its emphasis on the word *claim*. The idea, expanded, would be, "The Theosophical Society does not insist that it is sustained, guided by Adepts, Their mouthpiece and instrument. Whatever may be Their interest in and aid to it, these are not matters which it obtrudes, nor would it use them as a summons to membership

or as a menace to outsiders. The Society has to vindicate itself on its own merits, securing favor or the reverse according as it is believed to be useful or not."

But this is a very different thing from denying that it has Adept help, or even from stating the fact as a fact without seeking to enforce it as a tenet. There has never been any concealment of the relation of the T. S. to the Masters. Certain of Them favored its establishment; repeated references in Their letters quoted in *The Occult World* show Their interest; and it has always been understood that Madame Blavatsky, as an Initiate, was Their channel for communicating Occult knowledge to the Society first (it being the work to which she dedicated her life), and thence to the world. In the *Key*, p. 306, after saying that "during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those 'Masters', of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way", she adds, "If the *present attempt*, in the form of our Society, succeeds better than its predecessors have done, then" etc., etc. Observe that the Society was founded in 1875. This is a most explicit statement that the T. S. is an "attempt" by Masters to "help on spiritual progress", and that it is the one for the last quarter of this century.

This, however, has its obvious qualifications. On p. 299 of the *Key* she says: "The Masters do *not* guide the Society, not even the Founders; and no one has ever asserted that they did: they only watch over and protect it." Then she gives proof. "Watching over" and "protection" are certainly "help", though they are not "guidance". It is not to be supposed, for instance, that a Master intimates what changes should be made in the Constitution, or who should be elected to offices, or what fees should be exacted, or how business details should be carried on. But when a mistake in policy has been made, or when the enemy has lifted up his heels, or when some prominent F. T. S. has seceded from membership and used every effort to befoul and decry his late associates, it is surely natural for Those who see how much is at stake to bring healthful currents to bear or in some way to induce influences to nullify the evil. As Madame Blavatsky says,

*Key*, page 299, "No mistakes have been able to cripple it [the T. S.], and no scandals from within, nor the most damaging attacks from without, have been able to overthrow it." And at this date we can point out most suggestive corroboration in regard to herself and to it. One of the most significant facts in the history of the last two years is the subsidence into failure, contempt, and obscurity of the several persons who were foremost in effort to "expose" her and to paralyze her work. With voices tremulous with delight and with triumphant prophecies of the ruin that was to come, they exploded their little mine, called upon all men to witness the devastation, exulted in the collapse of H. P. B. and Theosophy,—and then, the noise having quieted down and the dust dissipated, found the Society stronger than ever, H. P. B. vindicated, the press more friendly to the Cause, and they themselves discredited and dropped. Names will occur to every Theosophist. The wheels of the victorious Sisera's chariot tarried because he had been effectually disposed of: he did not divide the prey; but, instead of that, Deborah sang a very suggestive pœan which ends up in words all may lay to heart. (*Judges*, v, 31.)

As to "The Theosophical Society and H. P. B." The main purpose of that article was to show that, inasmuch as H. P. B. avowed her Occult teachings to have come from Masters, either she was untrue, in which case we had no security for our doctrines, or else she was true, in which case the Society should loyally adhere to both her and Them. The matter of help given by Them to the Society was incidental. But there is nothing in the article which conflicts with the interpretation offered by the FORUM to the quotation; it rather is a confirmation. The FORUM may say, from knowledge of the author of the words quoted and of the author of the article, that neither has any doubt of the help given to the T. S. by Masters. This being so, the suggested interpretation seems most natural and legitimate.

## QUESTION CXXXVII.

*In the attempt by beginners to practice meditation, shall we tkrow our thoughts out to the Supreme Good (see Epitome of Theosophy, page 3) or shall we try to realize the God in ourselves?*

*Ans.*—In methods of devotion, as in other things, men differ so greatly that it must ever be unwise to propound a uniform rule. But among the arguments favoring the former method are the following.

Introspection is a necessary process for learning the constitution of human nature and the particular characteristics and defects of the individual. A man will not know himself unless he studies himself. But he would be a very complacent person who expected to find within his own being the finest and highest of all possible human merits. Unless endowed with unsurpassed conceit, he would not look within to ascertain the utmost reach of man's intellect or knowledge or sentiment or power or endurance. Still less would he do so for the farthest range of moral purpose or spiritual intuition. How much less for a survey of the Infinite, the Almighty! Certainly the germ of a godlike nature is within him, but it is not in germs that we study a complete evolution; we turn to the perfected whole. If we wish to in any way realize the sublimity of Divinity, our first impulse is naturally to an outlook on the limitless without, not to an inlook on the limited within.

This is sustained by another fact. Any realization of Infinite Wisdom and Power must of course be inadequate, but such as is practicable is to be acquired by the largest possible survey of the fields wherein they have been manifested. Evidently the extended universe, our own globe, the course of history, taken in connection with research into Nature, its marvellous variety and complexity, the proofs of design and adaptation everywhere visible, the whole teeming world of being disclosing in infinite measure evidence of the Creator's skill,—all these are an incomparably wider and fuller sphere for investigation than the narrow confines of one individual. Here again, while it is true that a man is an epitome of the cosmos, it is also true that an epitome is only useful as a condensed summation, is never intended for the limit of study. The tract referred to, *An Epitome of Theosophy*, is not a substitute for *Esoteric Buddhism*, the *Key*, the *Secret Doctrine*, and other treatises, but only a brief digest of their contents. No one would ever think of referring to it as the subject for study, but only as a pointer to subjects.

Once more. The human faculties are as yet little known to their possessors, and the method of their use is slightly understood. Except in the most general terms of avoiding distraction and of concentrating attention on one topic, we do not at this stage have the clue to a skilful and scientific employment of intuition. To undertake exploration of the most sublimated of spheres when we do not even comprehend antecedent and less difficult ones, would not commend itself as a hopeful step. This would be even less the case when we remember that we have no means of separating pure concepts of God from such as we hold from descent, association, or instruction, and therefore that what appeared to us original, God-given, might be really a misleading mixture of truth and error. And the straining inward of faculties having a suggestively outward bent would be much more likely to intensify danger of misconception than to relieve from it.

All things considered, the probability of any man's attaining to right views of God seems to inhere in his getting away as far as possible from himself and his own limitations, opening his mind to sunlight from every quarter, looking to the limitless universe as the reservoir of truth, and not his own small content, giving free range to his thought in the without, not converging it to a point in the within. All emphasis on the Self is said to be cramping, and it could hardly be less so in the highest topics than in the lower. From another point of view sacred writers have proclaimed the great universe as a more impressive exhibition of Divine Wisdom than the little being who dwells on one little globe in it. "When I consider Thy heavens", said David, "the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him!" How very small we seem in all this grandeur! Still, we are realities, and we have an important place in the cosmos. What it is, and how best to be filled, and what is exacted of us will in all probability be better learned by expanding ourselves into relations with the whole than by peering with undeveloped faculties into a little-understood region without adequate light.

## QUESTION CXXXVIII.

*In view of the fact that no Individuality can cease to exist, how does the annihilation of a black magician, mentioned in the Key to Theosophy, punish the offender; and of what does the annihilation consist?*

*J. C.*—The *Key* distinguishes between Individuality and Personality. The former refers to the immortal or Higher Self—Atma-Buddhi-Manas, or sometimes to the Higher Ego, Manas, immortal throughout a manvantara only, unless it unites itself to the Higher Self. Annihilation occurs when, through prolonged spiritual wickedness, the lower self, or personality, separates completely from the Higher Ego, and is reborn, soulless, in lower and lower forms until momentum is exhausted. The personal self finally becomes annihilated after indescribable and conscious suffering lasting an enormous period of time. The higher principles, in this case, put forth, so to say, another *personality*, and the separated one, dropped from it, dies like a withered branch severed from the parent tree.

## QUESTION CXXXIX.

*Can Karma be transferred?*

*Ans.*—One of most indefeasible tenets of Theosophy is the rigorous union of cause and effect, the inviolability of Karmic action. Inherent in the conception of Karma is the continuity of the links. They cannot be severed at some point, the preceding part arbitrarily ended, and the succeeding started afresh in another region. Karma is like character—generated by and a constituent of the individual himself; not at all like clothes, which may or may not fit the wearer, and which may be handed over to somebody else. The consequences of acts attach to the actor, and he has no more power to transfer them than to transfer an integral part of his make-up.

It is this view of Karma which puts Theosophy in such relentless opposition to the doctrine of "vicarious atonement". There are other fatal objections to it, objections moral, philosophical, religious, and experiential, but the one over-mastering condemnation is its severance of the line of necessary sequence. For Theosophy to tolerate the doctrine in any form or

under any disguise would be to contradict its own most vital principle.

One apparent, only apparent, exception may be brought forward,—that of a superior causing acts to be done by an inferior, and so assuming the consequences. But it must be remembered that, if the acts have a moral quality and the inferior not coerced by overwhelming force, he cannot escape responsibility. Even the civil law will not excuse an employee who cheats at the behest of his employer. The Karma cannot be shifted to the latter. But if the act was under irresistible coercion, as by a small child under dominion of a brutal parent, the inferior, having no volition, is as a tool of wood or iron, and the whole responsibility is on the superior.

This is a different question from the *degree* of Karma incurred by participants in an act. Larger knowledge or skill or influence may apportion a greater share to one than the other, as constantly happens in mutual undertakings, and as obvious justice demands. But that Karma in bulk can be passed around or handed over is a strange conception of it. Philosophy would scout at such, and the great Law dispose of it very quickly.

## QUESTION CXL.

*Madame Blavatsky says that apes descended from early man, instead of man from the apes. Mr. Sinnett says that the Darwinian theory is true, and that man descended from apes. They both claim to have had their inspiration from the Masters. When the Masters differ, who shall decide?*

*Ans.*—The passage on page 78 of *Esoteric Buddhism* may be otherwise interpreted, though the one on page 82 does affirm Darwinianism. Madame Blavatsky's contrary teaching is explicit. But these facts do not prove difference between Masters. The logical error in the Question lies in assuming that, if there are two claims to inspiration, both are equally genuine.

Mr. Sinnett's introduction to the notice of Masters, and the inestimable privileges in correspondence and instruction he enjoyed, were brought about by Madame Blavatsky, Their pupil, friend, and agent. The service Mr. Sinnett performed in im-

parting to the Western world what he had learned was enormous. But it by no means follows that he invariably gave the true interpretation to the lessons, or that everything in his books precisely portrays facts in esotericism, or that he never erred in statement, or that the Masters are committed to all he wrote. It is now well understood, for instance, that his figures as to the length of stay in Devachan are misleading. It could hardly be that even his great ability would wholly protect him from mistake when outside the region covered by direct instruction. Now the relation of apes to men was entirely outside it.

Madame Blavatsky, on the other hand (waiving the question of her own status as an Adept), had immediate access to Masters and Their learning. Looked at merely as the medium through whom Mr. Sinnett gained presentation to Them, she must have been nearer to Them than he. Moreover, Mr. Sinnett has for years received no communications from Them, whereas her intercourse was uninterrupted, and it was during those years that *The Secret Doctrine* was written. Hence her teaching was later, fuller, explicit on points not revealed to him. The fact is not that Masters differed among Themselves, but that Mr. Sinnett differed from Them. Very possibly he may not do so now, for he has *The Secret Doctrine* whereby to correct his earlier impressions. And so, for that matter, have we.

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